



(C) InSIDer's View of History... A Lesson in Personal Accountability

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(U//FOUO) Note from SIGINT Communications:
This is the first "InSIDer's View of History" story.
See the [related article](#) for details on this series.

(C) In the winter of 1995-96, I was deployed to Italy in support of our Balkans effort known as OPERATION JOINT ENDEAVOR. I was the deputy C-2 of the Combined Air Operations Center (CAOC) in Vicenza. One of my many, many duties was to oversee the preparation of target packages for contingency bombing as American tanks crossed the river into Bosnia. My staff and I diligently prepared these packages, which consisted mainly of imagery packages with Designated Mean Point of Impact (DMPIs - pronounced 'dimpy' by the Air Force guys). Our job was to select targets from all three factions at the time (Serb, Croatian and Muslim) that represented a range of options for the CINC, from show of force through harassment to major destruction.

(C) Due to the uncertainty of resistance to the ground effort, the CINC (we call them "Combatant Commanders" now) wanted to have a total package in his hip pocket if he had to attack. There had been some mistakes made in previous bombings (with civilian losses) and an F-16 had been shot down so the packages had to be checked and rechecked with the weaponeers and operational planners. After a LOT of work we had a good set of target packages for the CINC.

(C) One day, the CINC (General Ryan - future Chief of Staff of the Air Force) showed up unannounced at my door. After I recovered from the shock of seeing all those stars in my doorway, I asked him how I could help him. He said he wanted to review the target packages. Since there were over 100 of them, I selected about ten for him to spot check (I assumed he was a busy guy). He sat right down and began his review. He pored over the photos and asked about the DMPIs. After an explanation he said, "I approve all the DMPIs, now give me the next set." I said that he didn't have to review them all since it was my job to do this for him since he is busy, etc. If you know General Ryan at all, you will not be surprised by his immediate reaction.

(C) As I was put at the position of attention, I was given a lesson in personal responsibility. The CINC explained that warfare had made a fundamental change - that commanders had a legal responsibility in the war crimes sense. If a mistake is made, there was the real possibility of a war crimes charge in the climate of the Balkans war. The CINC was bound and determined that no one below him would be responsible. So he wanted to personally approve every DMPI. It became a long day and a learning experience for me. It really brought home the concepts of responsibility and accountability.



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(S//SI) For us today this lesson is especially important. The planning cycle for dropping a bomb has compressed from a day to minutes and the criterion for the aiming point has less and less review. As many of you know, our forces in Iraq are dropping bombs on the strength of SIGINT alone. We are proud of their confidence in us, but have you ever considered the enormous risk the commanders are assuming in this regard? Are you ready to share that risk? Makes you think about how critical your best efforts are.

(C) Keep in mind the awesome responsibility we have to do quality work fast. In the past we may have traded quality for speed. That equation doesn't hold any more. We are in the business of saving lives and we mainly think of it as alerting the good guys to the bad guys and targeting them, but it also means being aware of the location of the good guys (to prevent fratricide) and more and more an awareness of the non-combatants (to prevent the tragedy of killing the innocents). Ask yourself this question: Am I doing my very best? Our success and their lives depend on the answer.

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